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1. Q. Discuss the relative support for the Communist regime by Yugoslavian historic regions, such as Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, and Montenegro. In which of the provinces do the Communists enjoy most or least support? Explain the reasons from a sociological as well as a political standpoint.

A. More than 80% of Yugoslavia's population is engaged in agriculture. Farms are usually small. Those in the barren districts of Lika, Dalmatian Zagora, parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatian Zagorje, Montenegro, and Macedonia are too small and unproductive to support their owners. The regime openly admits that the Communist Youth Organisation and the Peoples Youth Organisation have made little progress among the peasants. The regime is trying to create a horizontal division between the poor and the rich farmers but has not been very successful because so little actual difference exists between the two groups. The social organization in the villages has retained a patriarchal character with the richer farmers considering it their duty as moral and political leaders of the community to extend aid to the less favored. Furthermore, the villages still try to be economically self-sufficient, and the old customs regulating mutual aid and unremunerated community work are still in force.

The agrarian reform was an attempt to win the farmers by playing on their greed for land. It was also designed to weaken the churches and the richer farmers. The measure proved a failure because there was insufficient land available for redistribution. Very few large estates were still in existence and even those few had been greatly reduced in size by the agrarian reform instituted during the 1920's. The measure also aroused public resentment because it took land from the churches. This resentment was particularly evident in Serbia, Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Macedonia where the people are not only deeply religious but have always regarded the priests as their temporal leaders in a continuous struggle for survival. During centuries of struggle against the Turks, these people received advice and assistance from their priests and shelter in their monasteries.

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Other measures followed the agrarian reform. Farmers were told where, when, and what to plant; grain was ruthlessly taken from them; they were forced to deliver large percentages of their harvests at stipulated prices; they were subjected to intimidation and arrest for non-compliance with regulations; and many were recruited for the army or for "voluntary" work. The protracted periods of army service imposed upon the youth of the nation have been a great financial blow to the poorer farmers. Before the war they relied upon the financial support provided by the younger members of their families who migrated to the cities for seasonal work and contrived to save a large portion of their meager salaries to supplement the farmers' inadequate earnings.

Under these circumstances, it is obvious that the regime cannot expect the support of that 80% of the population which is engaged in agriculture. Submission to the regime is reluctant and temporary and is tempered by repeated acts of sabotage. Farmers would assume an active part in any action directed toward overthrow of the regime. The form such an action might take depends upon the character of the national groups as molded by history.

The Serbian farmer is most feared by the regime because he is politically mature, his loyalty to the King is indisputable, and his mind is acute enough to perceive the real meaning of any governmental action or propaganda. He is courageous and capable of frontal attack, yet sufficiently patient and coldly calculating to use underground methods if he considers them necessary. The Serbian farmer is tired of the regime and is ready to take action against it if given a proper signal and the assurance that he will not be abandoned in the middle of his fight.

The regime believes that Montenegro is its most loyal region. The secret police, the Communist Party, the Army, and the Government are all crowded with Montenegrins whose barren land cannot support them. Much of the Montenegrin population remaining at home is dependent upon the largess of job-holding relatives. This situation generates at least a show of loyalty toward the regime which provides these jobs. I believe, however, that Montenegro is an ideal region for the organization of an effective underground. The people have retained their clan organization, their sense of honor is tremendous, and they have an oriental horror of "losing face." They are intensely proud that they maintained their independence when all of their neighbors were conquered by the Turks. They have a type of courage which borders on insanity. A Montenegrin, for example, would not lie down to avoid a bullet lest he be accused of fear. If the people of Montenegro are convinced that their honor requires them to take arms against the regime, their revolt will be most formidable.

The Croatian farmer is also regarded by the regime as not very dangerous. The regime knows that he too is not particularly loyal, and that he would seize any favorable opportunity to turn against the regime. The regime believes, however, that the Croatian farmer lacks the ability to organize a continuous fight. If he rebels it will be spontaneously, sporadically, and without proper leadership. Such a rebellion will be easily crushed. The regime may be correct in this evaluation. For any revolt to be successful, anti-regime sentiment must be crystallized, the intellectuals snatched out of their apathy, and the people organized and given a clearly defined goal. The desire for justice, freedom, and decency will then find expression in a fight which may take such form as is necessary. The great prestige of Dr. Matulic and the King would help those who undertook this job.

The same considerations apply in all the historic regions except Macedonia, where the peasants have suffered so long under different masters that they believe no one. They are waiting but not fighting. Small groups might be organized which would command some help from the peasants, but I doubt that Macedonians would enter wholeheartedly into an-out-and-out fight.

2. Q. What is the attitude of non-Communist Croat politicians of prewar days, toward the Serbian group? Discuss also the status of the Serbian Orthodox church and the Roman Catholic church in relationship to the regime.

A. If it sometimes appears that the Orthodox Church is more friendly toward the regime than the Catholic, it does not mean that it is supporting the regime. It is only employing tactics which enable it to work with minimum interference from the regime, and permit it to give the people spiritual leadership, advice, and moral strength in this difficult period. The Orthodox Church itself is as unfriendly toward the regime and as anxious for its downfall as the Catholic Church.

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